



## *What are the issues?*

# Strong strike mandate critical to protect jobs and safeguard benefit plan at the bargaining table

Starting on April 22, HEU members are urged to back their bargaining committee with a strong strike mandate so that negotiations for a renewed collective agreement can get back on track with the Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC) and government.

HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson says a strong show of unity from members is needed to protect members' jobs and benefits, and to secure safer workplaces.

“By voting yes, HEU members will be sending a clear signal to health employers and government that they will continue to stand for decent jobs and safer workplaces,” says Pearson.

The main issues at stake in bargaining are as follows:

**Job Security:** The moratorium on contracting out expired March 30. Health employers and government continue to demand the right to contract out.

Health employers' version of addressing job security is a cap on contracting out to 1,500 full-time equivalents (FTE's). That's higher than any previous cap, and would put thousands of full-time, part-time and casual positions at risk.

**Benefits:** HEABC wants to change to the governance of the benefit plan. Right now, the benefit plans are under the sole direction of health employers. They want to set up a joint trust for benefits, much like the joint trusteeship of the Municipal Pension Plan.

HEU is not opposed to joint governance. In fact, much better decisions could have been made over the benefit plan in the past, if workers had input.

But health employers need to agree to a trust framework and funding formula that recognizes HEU members work in some of the most dangerous workplaces in the province, and that the workload and injury rates contribute to the cost of benefits.

**Sick Leave:** HEABC wants to end the right to sick leave payout for any new hires. The HEU bargaining committee received strong direction from members that they do not want two-tier rights and benefits in the Facilities agreement.

**Casuals:** The unions have proposed contract language allowing casuals to register for work in more than one department. Right now, there are some local agreements that allow for that. HEU wants broader recognition in the collective agreement allowing casuals more access to work.

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It's about economic security for workers and easing crushing workloads. But HEABC has rejected our proposals.

**Backfill:** The FBA wants improvements that would begin to address unfilled shifts. The union wants improvements that provide relief to members who consistently work short, and require employers to take responsibility for work prioritization when staff are absent.

Employers say no.

**Premiums and Allowances:** HEABC's response to the unions' modest proposals for increases to shift and on-call premiums is to plead poverty.

**Vacation Days:** Members want their vacation days restored. The main issue with health employers is about when they will be restored and who pays.

**Union Rights:** The unions have proposed changes that would allow us to deal with the challenges locals face at multi-employer worksites. But health employers came back with language that would expand their management rights.

HEU is also looking for language that would allow members to know why they are being called into meetings that could result in discipline. HEABC will only agree to provide the location of the meeting.

**FBA Education Fund:** The fund has been successful, year after year. It provides valuable training and upgrading for thousands of members and to the benefit of the entire health care system. But so far government is refusing to fund it going forward.

**Ambulance Service:** CUPE 873 Ambulance Paramedics and Dispatchers are facing an attack on decades' old contract provisions that have been attached as an appendix to the Facilities collective agreement.

HEABC wants to strip seniority rights, expand management discretion on postings and expand the right to eliminate long-standing shift patterns. They're doing it behind the smokescreen of government's policy objective of expanding utilization of paramedics in the community.

How do we know? We made proposals to address government's policy objectives. But their demands require wholesale change to contract language that would apply throughout the province and to all areas of service delivery.

**B.C. Emergency Health Services – BCGEU Administrative Support:** BCGEU members working at the BCEHS do very similar work to administrative support workers in Facilities. HEABC wants to delete their long-standing collective agreement that they came into Facilities with in 2010, and apply the Facilities contract. This makes sense in some instances, but these workers do have unique working conditions and contract language not found in Facilities.

**Wages and term:** HEABC and government are insisting on a five-year deal – the same one they've gotten at four other tables. They also want to hold the pattern on the money – 5.5 per cent over five years with nothing in year one.

Strike votes will be scheduled over the next couple of weeks and details will be posted in the workplace and on the web at [www.heu.org](http://www.heu.org). The results will be announced on May 1.

April 1, 2014